



Tittabawassee Township

Celebrating Our 175th Year 1841–2016



Tittabawassee Township Historical Society

From the collection of Howard Vasold & Others

Tittabawassee Township was surveyed by Edward Tiffin, and dated 23 April 1822. On the West side of the “Tetabawasink” River meaning “river that follows the shoreline”, a track of six thousand acres was reserved as Black Birds Town. And at some point in time, the name of the river was changed to the Tittabawassee.

In 1833 Joseph Busby, one of the early pioneers of Saginaw County was granted land in Section 28. Other settlers soon followed. Land was cheap and relations with the Indians were very friendly. The woods furnished plenty game and river abounded with fish.



Early Settlers Working on the Tittabawassee River

The first family to purchase land, December 1, 1837 and live in the township was Doctor Luke Wellington, his wife Nancy and one daughter Sarah born in 1835 in N.Y. A son Samuel F. was born in 1837. There after other families began to settle here.

An act to organize the township of Tittabawassee was passed by the State Legislature in 1840, and was approved on March 30, 1840. Citizens of the township met at the home of Obadiah Crane, April 15, 1841 to organize the township taking its name from the river.



Early Freeland Post Office

A group of two or three log buildings was built some time in the 1850s on the east side of the river at Pierce Road. It was named Loretto, and platted in 1859,

and its post office was called Jay, after Jefferson Jacquith, an early settler. A second group of buildings existed at a point a little north of Loretto, also on the east side of the river. This second group, platted in 1867 was known as the Village of Tittabawassee, now known as Freeland. The rails were laid in 1867 for the Flint and Pere Marquette Railroad. The first run from Saginaw to Midland was on December 5, 1867. The location of the railroad station prompted the Post Office and businesses to move from Loretto to Freeland.

The Tittabawassee River was considered the foremost producer of logs in the state. The first boom was started in 1856 by Joseph Whittier of the Charles Merrill & company. In eight years approximately one billion, seven hundred million board feet of logs were rafted down the river to the sawmills of Saginaw. The sawmills provided the main source of employment, other than farming. Many settlers farmed in the summer and worked at the sawmill in the winter.



Michigan Big Wheel & Loggers

In the spring of 1850, the Roeser brothers William 25, Otto 27, and Gustave 34



William Roeser

and his wife Louisa left Halle, Germany for the U.S. Coming to Michigan, they settled in the township, where the Memorial Park Building is located now, and built a house. In 1851, William and Otto purchased 80 acres.

In 1853, Garrett and Elizabeth Freeland came to the township and purchased 14.70 acres on the west side of the river where the Festival Park is located and built a log hotel, which later burned.

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William Roeser built the first general store on the corner of Main and Park streets in 1855. A new barn was built on the southwest corner of Main and Washington streets. William Roeser then sold 2.74 acres of that corner to Elizabeth Freeland on July 16, 1856. She and her husband turned the barn into the Freeland Hotel, which included a dining room and bar.

The Freeland Hotel was very popular with the lumber and river men who would meet at "Freeland's" at the end of the day. Elizabeth became popularly known as "Mammy Freeland" and eventually the Village of Tittabawassee became known as Freeland.

The Bell Seymore, an 85-foot steamship with a flat bottom began to make runs from Saginaw to Midland every other day in 1859. The ship ran until the spring of 1867. The fare for passengers was 75 cents per day and the male passengers were expected to work as deck hands. They made stops along the way, including Freeland, to deliver merchandise to the Merchants. It was said, "the Belle could float on dew".

The railroad, riverboats, and stagecoaches, all served Freeland. Down river at Tittabawassee Road, people were able to cross the river by means of the Kapitan Ferry. A ferry crossed at Pierce road also. The first bridge across the river in Freeland was a wooden bridge. It opened on 31 March 1870. A steel bridge replaced it in 1895.

February 22, 1898 the Hotel Bishop opened for a party, this hotel was later known as Rodeitcher's.

Henry L. Smith and William Gunn came from Caro and built the Freeland Bank in 1904. The Village began to grow and many stores were built. A fire destroyed several stores on the east side of the south Main Street July 21, 1914.



Dietikers General Store 1891



Kapitan Ferry at the Tittabawassee Road Crossing

On 17 January 1923 the old Freeland Hotel burned to the ground. With the advancement of the auto and improved roads, by 1929 there were five general stores in Freeland, plus Bert Ferris Hardware, Freeland Oil Co.,

Ira Louse Funeral Home, Michigan Bell Telephone Office, Reinhart Auto Sales, Standard Oil Co., Timmons Garage and Wolohan's Elevator. A new community hall was built in 1935, with a dance floor, stage, kitchen, rest rooms.

Schools

Joseph King built the first school in Freeland in 1854 on the northwest corner of Washington and Second Streets. Jacob Lewis was the first school teacher. He was also a preacher at the Congregational Church.

A two-story school was built in 1872 on Church Street. This building was later purchased by the Odd Fellows and used by them until it was torn down in 1953. It is now the location of the Freeland Fire Station.



Freeland High School built in 1872

In 1914, the two-story four-room school called the North Building was built. In 1960, a new high school (now the elementary school) was built. The first graduating class was in 1963. The name of the school district was changed from Tittabawassee to Freeland Community Schools to represent a district of over 43 square miles. The new high school on Webster Road had the first graduating class in 1980.

Churches

Freeland is served by several churches. The Freeland United Methodist being the oldest ongoing church in the area, organized in 1846 by Joseph King. Others are St. Agnes Catholic Church, Zion Lutheran Church, First Baptist Church, Church of God-Seventh Adventist and the Freeland Assembly of God.

The Congregational Church is no longer located in Freeland.

As we celebrate the 175th birthday of the Tittabawassee Township, let us look forward to the future, remembering to honor those who have contributed to the history and development of the area.



Freeland United Methodist Church 1874

Back again for 2016!
FREE
SHUTTLE SERVICE

Starting Friday at 6 pm,
the Walleye Festival is providing
free transportation
from Burt Watson's
to local restaurants
and points of interest
until 4 am!

Saturday shuttle bus will run
10 am - 4 am
and include stops at the
Walleye Festival Car Show every hour!

We Tell It Like It Was !

*To learn more about our history,
or to get involved with its preservation,
please contact:*

Tittabawassee Township Historical Society

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